



## MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

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### Testimony on HB 5742 and HB 5743

#### House Committee on Appropriations

#### Michigan House of Representatives

Wednesday, June 30, 2009

Room 352, House Appropriations, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, State Capitol  
Lansing, Michigan

Paul R. Wegmeyer

Chairperson

MAPT Legislative Committee

Good morning. Thank you Chairman Cushingberry and the entire House Committee on Appropriations for allowing us the opportunity to testify today before this distinguished committee regarding **HB 5742** (2009) and **HB 5743** (2009). On behalf of the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation, we would also like to thank the sponsor of the bills, Representative LeBlanc, for addressing the issue of school bus inspection, a topic that is of high priority to our association's membership throughout Michigan.

My name is Paul Wegmeyer. I currently serve as the supervisor of transportation at Holt Public Schools. I am also a Third Party Test Examiner and owner of a Third Party Testing organization in Northern Lower Michigan which is authorized by the Michigan Department of State, Bureau of Regulatory Services, Driver Programs Division. I have been administering driver skills testing for driver candidates seeking a Michigan Commercial Driver's License for the past fourteen (14) years. The testimony I am providing for you today is on behalf of the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) where I currently serve as chairperson of the association's Legislative Committee.

MAPT represents over 800 pupil transportation officials from 826 public, private and contract school bus fleets throughout Michigan. These administrators oversee the effective, efficient and safe transportation of approximately 860,000<sup>1</sup> schoolchildren to and from school, every school day, on approximately 15,000 school buses driven by some 15,000 Michigan school bus drivers who cover over 1,000,000 miles [*the equivalent of 40 trips around the world*] every school day throughout Upper and Lower Michigan in accomplishing this task.

My purpose today is to present **MAPT's concern over the timeliness of these two bills and the unintended consequence of increasing the liability to local school districts and private entities from the proposed changes to the pupil transportation act and the Michigan vehicle code.**

MAPT supports reform efforts that are underway regarding the school bus inspection program when it comes to identifying ways to improve the safety outcomes of the statewide inspection program. In recent months, MAPT has been working with the department of state police, the department of education, private contractors, school bus dealers, the insurance industry and others to identify efficient and responsible reform measures. Such reforms are anticipated to come forward as revisions to SB 1009 (2009).

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<sup>1</sup> 2007-08 SE-4094 Pupil Transportation Expense Report. Michigan Department of Education, Fall 2008

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**MAPT recognizes that reform is needed in the school bus inspection program. MAPT does not oppose the bills in their present form. However, MAPT feels that, absent a comprehensive reform of the current school bus inspection program, it is premature at this time to change the mandate given to the department of state police by substituting the word “shall” with “may randomly inspect.”**

The pupil transportation act (PA 187 of 1990) requires that each school bus be inspected every year. The act further states that *“a person, school, or school bus owner shall not operate or permit to be operated a school bus which has not been inspected...”* If the language is changed for the department of state police from “shall” to “may randomly inspect,” there may be an unintended consequence of increased liability for school districts and private entities that face a difficult decision of operating or parking school buses that are not inspected. Any change in only one part of the law could have negative effects on public and private entities across the state.

We recognize the department of state police has not been adequately funded to perform the duties as required of the department by law in this current school year. We encourage the legislature to adequately fund a responsible school bus inspection program and to continue to do so while a reform school bus inspection program is identified.

Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to address any questions you or your fellow committee members may have.

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